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What the One Mill Tax For Schools Has done for Alabama Counties

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Harry C. Gunnels, Superintendent
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Introductory

That a local tax for schools is approved by the people all testimony establishes. In those counties where the constitutional one mill has been levied the citizens would not give it up, and, more, they demand the right to vote a larger levy by districts believing that this is a privilege they should enjoy for the building up of education.

Under the present constitution it is possible to levy only one mill, or ten cents on the hundred dollars, for schools in each county, and this must be by special vote of the people. In the counties that have accepted this plan the fund is regarded as indispensable and the people would not be without it. At every opportunity they express approval of it.

Experience being the safest teacher, the evidence of those who have levied the local tax is important. Below are given a number of letters from superintendents of counties where the local tax has been adopted and they unhesitatingly commend the plan. In fact they show that having once had the additional fund the schools could not do without it. It promotes longer terms and makes it possible to secure better teachers. And the poorer patrons do not feel the burden, the taxes falling, of course, on the owners of property, who, strange as it may seem, rarely ever oppose it, knowing that an educated people is the most prosperous people.

The letters contained in this little pamphlet are in reply to a communication written by Mr. Hervey W. Laird, Secretary of the Alabama Education Committee, addressed to the County Superintendents of those counties which have levied the one mill tax. They show evidence indisputable that the people who have tested the good things that can come from the use of this one mill school tax, endorse it and want to continue the levy.

HARRY C. GUNNELS,
Supt. of Education.

Superintendents Testify

Should Be Higher

B. H. Wilkerson, Superintendent, Lamar County: "Local tax was first levied in 1905, for a term of 10 years, and in my opinion we could re-levy it almost without opposition. The rate should be 20 cents instead of 10 cents on the one hundred dollars."

Needed By Districts

J. Alexander Smith, Superintendent, Fayette County: "This county levied a special school tax on April 8, 1905, for a period of 10 years. It has served to lengthen the terms materially in this county. I am altogether in favor of this tax, and, further than that, I am in favor of a local tax by districts, and if we have an opportunity I think we shall be able over here to roll up a good majority in favor of a constitutional amendment to this effect."

Will Vote It Again

Sam Ingram, Superintendent, Blount County: "The local tax for schools in Blount County is giving satisfaction. I am sure we will have no trouble in carrying it when the time comes for another vote."

Universally Approved

Jef Sox, Superintendent, Coosa County: "This county levied a tax for five years. We have had the benefit of the tax for four years. I have been almost all over the county and I have talked with representative men from different parts of the county and I find but little opposition to the measure. From this special tax we collect about $2,200 each year."

Gives Longer Terms

R. E. Blunt, Superintendent, Washington County: "We have the one mill tax in this county which adds about $3,200 to our public school fund, enabling us to have longer terms. No one feels this additional tax and we will vote in the November election for it to be continued for a term of 10 years."

Is a Popular Plan

J. A. Barnes, Superintendent, Monroe County: "In 1905 Monroe County voted the levy of a special one mill tax for the support of the public schools of the county for a period of five years. The election was held and carried by four-fifths majority. The one mill tax is a very popular scheme with the people and I hold no doubt whatever that it will be continued and even increased if the legislature will provide for such increase."

Would Even Raise It

T. L. Head, Superintendent, Clarke County: "There has not been a murmur from the people about paying this tax. I think our people see that they have not enough money with even the one mill tax and they would vote for any good measure to raise this amount."

No Backward Step

M. T. Linder, Superintenednt, Talladega County: "I think I am safe in saying that Talladega County will take no backward step in educational lines. The one mill tax was voted on in 1904 and carried by a large majority. Our people seem well satisfied with it."

Cheerfully In Line

S. R. Butler, Superintendent, Madison County: "The county tax levied by Madison County will expire in 1914. I believe the people of this county would cheerfully vote the tax again."

Pickens Approves It

W. H. Storey, Superintendent, Pickens County: "The county school tax was levied in Pickens County in 1905 for a period of 10 years. In regard to the district tax I will state that it is needed very much for reasons which I have set out in my reports to the Department of Education and papers read before the Alabama Educational Association. It is my opinion that the Education Committee should prepare petitions asking the legislature to submit an amendment to the people allowing the people of the State to vote on this proposition. With this petition should be a copy of the proposed amendment and some reasons for its adoption. The demand should be made by the people and this can be secured by placing these petitions in the hands of the three trustees in each school district of the State. In this way the entire State can be canvassed in a very few days. If this is done the legislature will be more likely to pass the bill.

"The legislature should pass a bill providing the machinery for carrying the amendment into effect should it be adopted without waiting for the next session of the legislature.

"We advocate this tax in our teachers' meeting and in school rallies held throughout the country. I am very anxious to see a local tax amendment passed and if I can render any service to the committee I shall be glad to do so."

No One Displeased

J. W. Moore, Superintendent, Chilton County: "We voted the one mill tax four years ago for six years and I have no cause to doubt it being voted in again."

In Good Favor

B. F. Gilder, Superintendent, Marengo County: "This taxation seems to be in good favor with the people. It enables our public schools to run more than a month longer than they could run without it."

Coffee Is In Line

C. H. Byrd, Superintendent, Coffee County: "Our people appreciate the tax and would vote it again."

Would Increase Amount

W. T. Hollingsworth, Superintendent, Chambers County: "The one mill tax for schools went into operation in 1906 for a period of 10 years. This brings in revenue of $6,000 per annum and the people are well pleased with it. I am sure they will continue the tax and with some agitation would increase it."

All Are For It

B. F. Hammond, Superintendent, St. Clair County: "I can't call to mind a single voter who objects to this tax. Our people are for local tax to a finish and are handicapped as the law now stands."

Increases School Fund

T. H. Roberson, Superintendent, Franklin County: "This question was submitted to the voters in this county in 1904, and was carried for a term of five years. Again in 1908 at the general election in November, seeing the first term of five years would expire before another general election, it was submitted again for another term of five years with the result that it carried. In both elections it was carried by an excess of the three-fifths required. It adds about $3,100.00 to our school funds in this county and thereby

lengthens our school term about one month. The people are pleased with it. When the present term is out I am sure the people will vote for it again."

Essential In Crenshaw

C. K. Sharpe, Superintendent, Crenshaw County: "We voted on this tax in 1905, and carried it, with only about 200 votes against it, for five years. As the five year levy had expired this year we voted to continue the levy and we only had 78 votes, out of 1,100 votes cast, against it. Our people could not do without it. It enables us to run our public schools one month longer, and I honestly believe, if the entire vote of the county could have been cast in this election the ratio of dissenting voters would have been less. I believe we could have carried a three mill tax as easily as we carried the one mill tax. We made the levy for 10 years this time. I can not see why any county should fail to carry this tax. My argument used to the poor class of people was that they did not have to pay the tax but the property owners had it to pay. A tenant with seven children and practically no personal property will pay absolutely nothing, and yet receive as much benefit as the children of the richest landlord in the county."

Wins In Cullman

W. M. Wood, Superintendent, Cullman County: "An election was held in Cullman County May 8th, 1907, to determine whether the people favored taxation of this kind and they voted favorably by three-fourths majority levying such tax for the term of 10 years. This would seem to indicate the popularity of the measure in this county and I have never heard any objections urged against it."

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Chas. C. Johnson, S[illegible], Perry County: "Perry County was among the first to vote this tax. From a close observation of our people I am of the opinion that our schools will never be what they should be until the local units, the districts, be allowed to tax themselves for school purposes if they wish it. Give each district the right to tax itself for school purposes and allow it its per capita amount of the State fund and communities will build where intelligence prevails and from these communities will go out the school spirit."

Pleased In Butler

C. H. Lewis, Superintendent, Butler County: "We levied the one mill tax several years ago in Butler. The people are very much pleased over the results and I don't think we will have any opposition next time. We voted the tax for five years and I feel now that it would be almost indispensable, and we could not run the schools successfully without it."

Lycurgus Leftwich, Superintendent, Clay County: "The local tax in my county is perpetual, so we do not have to vote on it. We like the local tax in our county and would be glad our laws were such we could assess and collect more local tax."